THE SINGING RABBIT

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ESKIMO FOLK TALES

ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN
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HOW THE RAVEN AND THE OWL PAINTED EACH OTHER

THE EIDER DUCKS AND THE FOX

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HOW THE RAVEN AND THE OWL PAINTED EACH OTHER

Long ago the raven and the owl lived happily as friends. Together they went out looking for food, shared everything they had fairly between them and knew no want. They lived many a long year, till their feathers turned whiter than snow.

One day the owl said to the raven:

"We've grown old without ever knowing what it is to be beautiful. All the other birds are decked out in red, black and grey, while you and I only show up during the short summer."

"That's quite right," said the raven.

"I know, why don't we paint each other," the owl suggested. "First you paint me, than I'll paint you."

The raven agreed. He took some charred blubber from a lamp, plucked a feather from his tail, and told the owl to prepare herself.

The owl perched on a stone, and the raven started carefully painting her as he moved around the stone, drawing beautiful black spots on each feather.

While he was painting the owl, the raven thought: "Now I'll try and make a real beauty out of her. She'll see what a fine piece of work this is and will make me beautiful as well."

The raven spent quite a long time doing his best to paint the owl. The owl grew tired of sitting still on the stone, and thought: "The raven has been plaguing the life out of me, to be sure. When my turn comes, I'll paint him in a jiffy."

At long last the raven finished his handiwork and said:

"Look, how beautiful I've made you! Now dry out a little in the wind and then paint me, too."

The owl agreed. After drying herself in the wind, she told the raven to prepare himself.

The raven perched on the stone, but the owl said:

"Oh no, stand here next to the stone, for I'll paint you in a different way. Close your eyes, and open them only when I tell you."

The raven stood by the stone, shut his eyes, and got ready. The owl took the lamp with the charred blubber, clambered up onto the stone, and poured the blubber over the raven from head to tail. The raven turned black in a trice.

"Now dry out a little in the wind," said the owl, "and then open your eyes and look at yourself. Although I painted you quickly, now everyone will see you come winter come summer."

The raven dried in the wind, opened his eyes and screamed:

"Oh my, what have you done?! Every little rabbit and mouse will see me coming. How am I supposed to find food now?"

To this the owl replied:

"But you yourself wanted to be beautiful!"

This made the raven angrier than ever.

"I tried my hardest when I painted you!" he said. "Now you're a real beauty, but I'm black as soot because of you. Get out of my sight, owl! I never want to see you again!"

The owl grew frightened and flew away.

From that time on, the raven has been black and the owl speckled. The owl always tries to avoid the raven, because she's afraid of him.

THE EIDER DUCKS AND THE FOX

Once upon a time the sly fox was walking along the seashore thinking to himself: "There's no animal brighter than me, nor any animal slyer!"

Just then some eider ducks swam by in the sea. They saw the fox and decided to trick him. Said the chief duck:

"You know, brothers, let's make a boat from our wings. We'll line up two by two with our wing tips touching. The fox will think it's a boat."

No sooner said than done. They lined up in two rows and spread out their wings. The middle looked like a boat with winged oars on either side. As the ducks skimmed across the sea, their leader shouted:

"Heave-ho, heave-ho! In out, in out, lively does it, lads!"

The fox's eyes had grown dim with the years. He looked out to sea and saw a boat with oarsmen in it, lustily heaving away. The fox stopped and shouted:

"Ahoy! Oarsmen, put in to shore and give me a ride! Don't you see who's walking along the shore? It's me, the master in these parts! Can't you see I'm tired!"

The eider ducks swam over to the shore. The fox climbed right into the middle of the little boat. He sat down, proudly puffed out his chest,

unfurled his tail, and smiled with delight. The boat quickly sailed away from the shore.

Suddenly the fox heard the voice of the ducks' leader:

"Well, brothers, we've had a good swim, so let's fly off now!"

Before the fox had time to come to his senses, he was dropped into the water. When he looked around, the ducks were already far away.

The fox started to swim toward the shore. As he swam, he thought: "Oh, did those ducks fool me. They disgraced me before the whole world."

It was hard for the fox to swim, because his drenched tail was pulling him down to the bottom.

"My tail, my beauty," the fox implored, "don't let me down, help me swim to safety!"

His tail started to steer him to the shore.

The fox barely reached dry land; he crawled onto a hillock and started to dry out in the sun.

In the meantime, the eider ducks flew over the whole tundra and told everyone how the fox had taken a dip in the sea.

Soon afterwards, all the animals, large and small, gathered round the fox to look at him and have a good laugh:

"Could you please tell us, dear fox, how the eider ducks managed to give you a freezing dip in the sea?"

At this the fox jumped up, shook himself, grabbed his wet tail in his teeth to make it easier for him to run, and bolted into the tundra to hide his shame. And the fox has never walked by the seashore to this day.

THE SINGING RABBIT

Once upon a time a young hunter went into the tundra to try his luck. He carried a bow in his hand, and a quiver with sharp-pointed arrows hung from his belt. As he walked on and on, he saw a rabbit with her little ones. Quietly he started sneaking up behind them, but the mother-rabbit saw the hunter and cried:

"Quick, my children, follow me!"

And the little bunnies hopped off after their mother.

The hunter started to chase them. He ran and ran for a long time and almost caught up with them when suddenly he saw a fast-flowing river before him.

The rabbits jumped into the river one by one.

By the time he reached the river, the rabbits had swum to the opposite shore and hidden themselves behind a little hill.

The hunter stopped down to the water. The river flowed so swiftly and was so deep, that he could not even see the bottom. No, it was impossible for him to cross it.

Sad and angry, the hunter sat down on a stone and wept bitterly.

The smallest of the bunnies stuck his long ears out from behind the hill and started to sing ditty to annoy the hunter:

We had a good stroll,
We had a good run,
We crossed a swift river,
And that was no fun!

But the unlucky hunter
He cries out his eyes —
He's afraid of the river
That saved all our lives!

Hi-hi-hi, ha-ha-ha
Ho-ho-ho, ha-ha-ha
He's afraid of the river
That saved our lives!

That was how the naughty bunny sang at him!

There was nothing for the unlucky hunter to do but put his arrows back into his quiver and set off for home empty-handed.

Angrily he brandished his bow at the little rabbits saying:

"Just you wait, little bunnies! You shan't fool me next time!"

ПОЮЩИЙ ЗАЙЧИК
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